Remarks

Claims 1-16 were originally presented in the present application, of which claims 10-16 have been withdrawn from consideration. By this amendment, claims 1 and 5-7 have been amended and to which claims 17-19 have been added. It is respectfully submitted that the pending claims define allowable subject matter.

Initially, the Examiner is thanked for indicating claims 5-9 to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In general, Applicant disagrees with the characterization in the outstanding office action of the allowable subject matter. It is not agreed that patentability is dependent upon the overall combination of the limitations of claims 1 and 5 as suggested in the outstanding office action. Applicant reserves its rights to pursue a broadening reissue, reexamination and the like with respect to claims that include fewer limitations than those of claims 1 and 5.

Claims 1-4 have been rejected under 35 USC § 102 (b) as being anticipated by Fukuda (USP 6,179,643). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection for reasons set forth hereafter.

Claim 1 generally recites an electrical connector assembly that includes, among other things, a plug having a housing having a top wall, a bottom wall and side walls. A receptacle is provided having an opening configured to receive a mating end of the plug. A deflectable latch is provided with a beam disposed along one of the side walls of the plug. The beam has a front end secured with the front end of the plug housing and a rear, freestanding end which is bias toward the plug to permit the plug and receptacle to be mated with one another. The latch also includes first and second latching projections extending from opposite sides of the beam that are also biasable towards the plug.

Fukuda discloses a connector lock mechanism that lacks the claimed deflectable latch, among other things. In Fukuda, a male connector (10) is provided with an elastic arm (15) formed on and projecting from an upper surface (11a) of the housing body (11) of the connector (10). The elastic arm (15) includes a front end portion (15a) that is formed with the upper surface (11a). The elastic arm (15) has front end portion (15a) with a smaller width and a rear end portion (15b) with a larger width. A gap (17) serves as a flexure space and is formed in a "width wise central portion" of the elastic arm (15). The elastic arm (15) includes a pair of

elastic pieces (18) on opposite sides of gap (17). Engagement projections (19) are formed on and project outward from the elastic pieces (18).

Fukuda's connector does not disclose a latch disposed along one of the side walls, but instead teaches it desirable to provide the elastic arm (15) on the upper surface (11a) of the housing (11). As explained in the present application, the provision of the latch along the side of the connector affords a lower profile connector. Claim 1 clearly defines the plug as having top, bottom and side walls and clearly locates the latch along one of the side walls. Fukuda fails to teach or suggest any such structure. Nor does the prior art provide any reason to modify Fukuda's connector in a manner that would render obvious such limitations.

In addition, Fukuda's projections (19) are not biasable toward the housing (11). Claim 1 clearly recites that the first and second latch projections extend from opposite sides of the beam and are biasable toward the plug. In Fukuda, elastic pieces (18) are separated by a gap (17) and are flexed toward one another to permit the projections (19) to similarly flex toward one another, not toward the housing (11).

Also, Fukuda's elastic arm (15) does not constitute a beam that is bias toward the plug to permit the plug and receptacle to be mated (as recited in claim 1). The elastic pieces (18) are bias towards one another to permit connection between the male connector (10) and the female connector (20). In view of the foregoing, it is believed that claim 1 is patentably distinct over the prior art.

In addition, new dependent claims 17-19 have been added that are also believed to define patentably distinct features. Claim 17 defines the width of the top wall as being greater than the height of the side walls. Fukuda's elastic arm (10) is clearly provided along the upper surface (11a) which has a greater width than the height of the side walls. Hence, Fukuda's connector directly contradicts claim 17.

Claim 18 defines an overall height of the latch to be substantially the same as the height of the side walls. Claim 19 further defines the distance between the outer edges of the first and second latch projections to be substantially the same as a height of the side walls. Not only is Fukuda's elastic arm (15) along the upper surface (11a), but Fukuda does not discuss any reason

or advantage to correlating the width at the outer ends of projections (19) with any other dimension of connector (10).

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims define allowable subject matter. Should anything remain in order to place the present application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully Submitted,

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